

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the following claims.

1. (currently amended) A method for forming hardened interconnects comprising:  
depositing a metal layer comprising copper and an additional metal species comprising beryllium over a semiconductor wafer surface wherein said copper and said additional metal species comprising beryllium are co-deposited; and  
after co-depositing said metal layer comprising said copper and said additional species comprising beryllium, performing chemical-mechanical polishing of said deposited metal layer comprising copper and an additional metal species comprising beryllium wherein said additional metal species hardens said deposited metal layer to reduce the rate of said polishing.
2. (cancelled)
3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said additional metal species is beryllium.depositing the metal layer comprising copper and the additional metal species comprising beryllium comprises depositing the metal layer and the additional metal species over an at least one opening in an insulating layer formed over the semiconductor wafer surface.
4. (currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the additional metal species comprising beryllium forms a solid solution in said the deposited metal layer.

5. (currently amended) A method for forming hardened interconnects comprising:
  - depositing a metal film over a semiconductor wafer surface;
  - introducing an additional metal species comprising beryllium to the metal film;
  - heating the deposited metal film with the introduced metal species;
  - allowing the heated metal film to cool, so as to form precipitates of said the introduced metal species; and

after allowing said heated metal film to cool performing chemical-mechanical polishing wherein said the additional metal precipitate hardens said deposited metal film to reduce the rate of said polishing.
6. (previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the deposited metal film is copper.

7 - 21 (cancelled)